Interim Audit Report

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Linwood Station, Indianapolis, IN

May 26, 2022

MEMORANDUM FOR: CHRISTINA M. JOHNSON-KENNEDY
MANAGER, INDIANA DISTRICT

FROM: Adam Bieda
Director, Field Operations

SUBJECT: Audit Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Linwood Station, Indianapolis, IN (Report Number 22-087-R22)

This report presents the results of our audit of Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Linwood Station, Indianapolis, IN.

We appreciate the cooperation and courtesies provided by your staff. If you have any questions or need additional information, please contact Latrice Pope, Operational Manager, or me at 703-248-2100.

Attachment

cc: Postmaster General
Corporate Audit and Response Management
Vice President, Delivery Operations
Vice President, Retail & Post Office Operations
Vice President, Central Area

Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Linwood Station, Indianapolis, IN
Report Number 22-087-R22

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Results

Background

This interim report presents the results of our self-initiated audit of mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Linwood Station in Indianapolis, IN (Project Number 22-087). The Linwood Station is in the Indiana District of the Central Area and services ZIP Code 46201, which serves about 30,926 people and is considered an urban community.[1] We judgmentally selected the Linwood Station based on the number of customer inquiries per route the unit received. From November 1, 2021, through January 31, 2022, the unit received 22 inquiries per route, which was more than the average of 7.36 inquiries per route for all sites serviced by the Indianapolis Processing and Distribution Center (P&DC).

Objective, Scope, and Methodology

Our objective was to evaluate mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Linwood Station in Indianapolis, IN.

To accomplish our objective, we focused on these four audit areas: delayed mail, package scanning, truck arrival scans, and property conditions. Specifically, we reviewed delivery metrics including the number of routes and carriers, mail arrival time, amount of reported delayed mail, package scanning, and distribution up-time.[2] During our site visit the week of March 14, 2022, we reviewed mail conditions; package and truck arrival scanning procedures; and unit safety, security, and maintenance conditions. We also analyzed the scan status of mailpieces at the carrier cases and in the "Notice Left" area[3] and interviewed unit management and employees. We discussed our observations and conclusions as summarized in Table 1 with management on April 29, 2022, and included their comments where appropriate.

The Linwood Station is one of three delivery units[4] the U.S. Postal Service Office of Inspector General (OIG) reviewed during the week of March 14, 2022, that are serviced by the Indianapolis P&DC. We issued this interim report to provide the U.S. Postal Service with timely information regarding the conditions we identified at the Linwood Station. We will issue a separate report[5] that provides the Postal Service with the overall findings and recommendations for all three delivery units. See Appendix A for additional information about our scope and methodology.

Results Summary

We identified issues affecting mail delivery, customer service, and property conditions at the Linwood Station. Specifically, we found deficiencies in all four of the areas we reviewed (see Table 1).

Table 1. Summary of Results

Audit Area	Issues Identified	
	Yes	No
Delayed Mail	X	
Package Scanning	X	
Truck Arrival Scanning	X	
Property Conditions	X	

Source: Results of our fieldwork during the week of March 14, 2022.

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1   We obtained ZIP Code information related to population and urban/rural classification from ESRI, which is based on 2010 Census Bureau information.
2   Time of day clerks have completed distributing mail to carrier routes.
3   The area of a postal facility where letters or packages that the carriers were unable to deliver are stored for customer pickup.
4   The other two units were the Carmel Main Post Office, Carmel, IN (Project Number 22-086) and the Plainfield Post Office, Plainfield, IN (Project Number 22-085).
5   The Project Number for the separate report is 22-091.

Finding #1: Delayed Mail

What We Found

We identified about 2,023 pieces of delayed mail, which included about 1,269 letters and 754 flats in the hot case[6] and carrier cases on the morning of March 15, 2022. In addition, management did not accurately report delayed mail in the Customer Service Daily Reporting System (CSDRS).[7] While they reported 1,148 delayed letters and flats, this represented only about 57 percent of the delayed mailpieces we identified at the unit. See Figure 1 for examples of delayed mail found at the hot case and carrier cases.

Why Did It Occur

Management did not ensure the station had enough resources to deliver the mail each day. Specifically, the station has five limited light duty carriers and several new city carrier assistants who are training in order to carry longer routes. In addition, carriers often transferred out of the unit to other offices and were not immediately replaced. However, it is still the responsibility of management to ensure that the unit has adequate coverage for each route.

In addition, the delayed mail was not properly reported in CSDRS on the day prior to our visit because an employee found a tray of letters and several flats after management had already entered delayed mail for the day.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have ensured that the station had enough resources to deliver all the mail each day. Postal Service policy[8] states that managers must review all communications that may affect the day's workload and be sure that replacements are available for unscheduled absences. In addition, policy[9] states that all types of

First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. Managers are also required to report in CSDRS[10] all mail that remains in a unit after the carriers have left for their street duties.[11]

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

When mail is delayed, there is an increased risk of customer dissatisfaction, which may adversely affect the Postal Service brand. In addition, inaccurate reporting of delayed mail in CSDRS provides management at the local, district, area, and headquarters levels with an inaccurate status of mail delays and can result in improper actions taken to address issues.

Figure 1. Examples of Delayed Mail

Source: OIG photos taken on March 15, 2022.

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6 A case designated for final withdrawal of mail as carriers leave the office.
7 A tool for unit management to manually self-report delayed mail, which provides a snapshot of the daily mail conditions of the mail at the point in time when the carriers have departed for the street.
8 Handbook M-39, *Management of Delivery Services*, TL-14, Section 111.2, June 2019.
9 *Committed Mail & Color Code Policy for Marketing Mail* stand-up talk, February 2019.
10 Delivery Condition Visualization replaced CSDRS effective April 1, 2022.
11 *Customer Service Daily Reporting System, Guidelines and Definitions*, September 2016.

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Finding #2: Package Scanning

What We Found

Employees improperly scanned packages at the delivery unit. Specifically, employees scanned 1,049 packages at the delivery unit between November 2021 and January 2022 (see Table 2). Further analysis of scan data for these packages showed that about 73 percent were scanned "Delivered". Note that this data excludes scans that could properly be made at a delivery unit, such as "Delivered – PO Box" and "Customer (Vacation) Hold" but, rather, represents scans performed at the delivery unit that should routinely be made at the point of delivery.

Table 2. Stop-the-Clock[12] (STC) Scans at Delivery Unit

STC Scan Type	November 2021	December 2021	January 2022	Total	Percentage
Delivered	365	208	193	766	73.02%
Delivery Attempted – No Access to Delivery Location[13]	23	64	118	205	19.54%
Delivery Exception – Animal Interference	6	22	37	65	6.20%
No Secure Location Available	2	3	4	9	0.86%
Receptacle Full / Item Oversized	3	0	0	3	0.29%
No Authorized Recipient Available	1	0	0	1	0.10%
Total	**400**	**297**	**352**	**1,049**	**100%[14]**

Source: OIG analysis of the Postal Service's Product Tracking and Reporting (PTR) System[15] data.

In addition, on the morning of March 15, 2022, before carriers arrived for the day, we selected 38 packages[16] to review and analyze scanning and tracking data. Of the 38 sampled packages, 11 had missing or improper scans. These included:

■ Six that were missing an STC scan to let the customer know the reason for non-delivery.

■ One that had a "Delivery Attempted" scan, which was performed 0.6 mile away from the delivery point. All packages are required to be scanned at the point of the delivery attempt.

■ Two that had "Delivered" scans, which should only be performed when a package is successfully left at the customer's delivery address.

■ Two that were missing an "Arrival at Unit" scan, which is required for performance measurement.

Further, we observed that 10 packages in the "Notice Left" area were not returned to the sender, as required.[17] These packages ranged from one to 10 days past their return dates. In addition, one package was scanned "No Such Number"[18] and should have been returned to sender instead of being placed in the "Notice Left" area.

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12 A scan event that indicates the Postal Service has completed its commitment to deliver or attempt to deliver the mail piece. Examples of STC scans include "Delivered," "Available for Pick-up," and "No Access".
13 This scan type includes both "No Access" and "Business Closed" scans and does not differentiate between the two. "Business Closed" scans are often legitimately made at the unit; therefore, some of these scans may have been correct.
14 Total percentage does not equal 100 percent due to rounding.
15 A system of record for all delivery status information for mail and packages with trackable services and barcodes.
16 We judgmentally selected nine packages from the carrier cases and 29 from the "Notice Left" area.
17 *Notice Left and Return Guidelines*, dated July 2007, states that domestic packages should be returned to sender on the 15th calendar day after a notice is left and international packages should be returned to sender on the 30th calendar day after a notice is left.
18 An STC event scan code used when the sender writes an address that does not exist.

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Why Did It Occur

These scanning issues occurred because management did not adequately monitor and enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures. For the 1,049 packages scanned at the unit, management stated that they were recently transferred to the unit and were overwhelmed with failed deliveries and undelivered routes due to staffing shortages. Therefore, management stated they were focused on getting mail delivered and did not have time to strictly enforce proper package scanning and handling procedures.

In addition, packages in the "Notice Left" area were not returned due to inadequate management oversight. The backup clerk stated that the regular clerk responsible for monitoring them does not review package return dates daily and she was on leave, therefore, they had not been reviewed recently.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including ensuring that all packages are scanned at the delivery point and not at the delivery unit. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,[19] which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.[20] In addition, packages in the "Notice Left" area should have been reviewed for second notices and returned to sender if they remained after the prescribed number of days.

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Customers rely on accurate scan data to track their packages in real time. When employees do not scan mailpieces correctly or properly handle packages in the "Notice Left" area, customers are unable to determine the actual status of their packages. By improving scanning and handling operations, management can potentially improve mail visibility, increase customer satisfaction, and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

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19 *Delivery Done Right the First Time* stand-up talk, March 2020.
20 *Carriers Delivering the Customer Experience* stand-up talk, July 2017.

Finding #3: Truck Arrival Scanning

What We Found

Employees at the Linwood Station did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes[21] as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from November 1, 2021, to January 31, 2022, and found that employees did not perform a scan for 169 of 179 scheduled trucks (about 94 percent) arriving from the Indianapolis P&DC.

Why Did It Occur

Management stated that they did not monitor scan performance data or enforce scan procedures for trailer/truck barcodes because the primary goal was to deliver the mail. During our interviews, a clerk stated that they were aware of the requirement to scan the trailer/truck barcodes but was not instructed to scan the barcode inside the trailer.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have reviewed the Arrive Depart Tracking Report[22] to ensure that all expected truck scans were being performed. They should also have instructed employees to perform appropriate trailer/truck barcodes scans and enforced the requirement. According to Postal Service policy,[23] employees must scan the trailer barcode on Postal Service trailers/trucks and highway contract route trucks arriving at the delivery unit during local operating hours.

Effect on the Postal Service and its Customers

When employees do not scan the trailer/truck barcodes, the Postal Service does not receive timely transportation information and is unable to address issues that may be causing mail delays, which could affect customer service.

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21 The 15-digit trailer barcode on the back door and inside right and left walls of the trailer.
22 The report shows whether employees perform the scanning of trailers/trucks arrival and departure.
23 United States Postal Service Standard Operating Procedure–Subject: *Trailer Scans at the Delivery Units.*

Finding #4: Property Conditions

What We Found

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Linwood Station, including fire extinguishers that had not been inspected, blocked electrical panels in a boiler room (see Figure 2), and broken windows outside the customer entrance (see Figure 3).

Figure 2. Blocked Electrical Panels

Source: OIG photos taken March 16, 2022.

Figure 3. Broken Windows

Source: OIG photo taken March 16, 2022.

Further, we identified issues related to the ceiling throughout the facility including:

- Dust build-up around air vents in the customer lobby (see Figure 4).
- Damaged and missing ceiling tiles in the workroom area (see Figure 5).
- Holes in the boiler room ceiling (see Figure 6).

Figure 4. Dust Around Air Vent

Source: OIG photos taken March 16, 2022.

Figure 5. Issues with Ceiling Tiles in Workroom Area

Source: OIG photos taken March 16, 2022.

Figure 6. Holes in the Boiler Room Ceiling

Source: OIG photos taken March 16, 2022.

Why Did It Occur

Unit management did not provide adequate oversight to ensure that facility condition issues were corrected. Management stated that other duties, such as dealing with staffing shortages and delivering mail, took priority. The station manager stated she was aware of the issues

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related to the damaged and missing ceiling tiles and tried to resolve them by contacting Facilities Single Source Provider (FSSP)[24] and filing a request in the electronic Facilities Management System (eFMS)[25]. During our site observations, local maintenance personnel came on-site to begin addressing these issues.

What Should Have Happened

Management should have provided sufficient oversight of facility maintenance, reported safety and maintenance issues as they arose, and followed up to ensure the issues were addressed. The Postal Service is required to maintain a safe environment for employees and customers. In addition, Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) requires employers to provide a safe and healthy workplace free of recognized hazards.[26]

Effect on the Postal Service and Its Customers

Management's attention to maintenance, safety, and security deficiencies can reduce the risk of injuries to employees and customers. Further the organization can reduce related costs, such as workers' compensation claims, lawsuits, and OSHA penalties; and enhance the customer experience and Postal Service brand.

Management's Comments

Management agreed with all findings in the report. See Appendix B for management's comments in their entirety.

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24 A response line for all facilities construction, repair, alterations, and service – related requests. It operates on a 24/7 basis.
25 A custom-built Postal Service system used to manage work orders, contracts, and payments for facility construction, repairs, and alteration contracts, along with real estate contracts.
26 OSHA Act of 1970 and Handbook EL-801, *Supervisor's Safety Handbook.*

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Appendix A: Additional Information

We conducted this audit from March through May 2022 in accordance with generally accepted government auditing standards and included such tests of internal controls as we considered necessary under the circumstances. Those standards require that we plan and perform the audit to obtain sufficient, appropriate evidence to provide a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective. We believe that the evidence obtained provides a reasonable basis for our findings and conclusions based on our audit objective.

We relied on computer-generated data from the PTR system, CSDRS, the Surface Visibility[27] database, and eFMS. Although we did not test the validity of the controls over these systems, we assessed the accuracy of the data by reviewing existing information, comparing data from other sources, observing operations, and interviewing Postal Service officials knowledgeable about the data. We determined the data were sufficiently reliable for the purposes of this report.

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27 Surface Visibility collects end-to-end data by linking multiple scans of a single asset to create visibility data to support planning, management, and optimization of the surface network.

Appendix B: Management Comments

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

May 12, 2022

JOHN CIHOLTA
Director, Audit Operations

Subject: Draft Report – Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Linwood Station, Indianapolis, IN (22-087)

Thank you for providing the Postal Service with an opportunity to review and comment on the findings contained in the draft audit report, Mail Delivery, Customer Service, and Property Conditions Review – Select Units, Indiana Region (Project Number 22-087). Indiana District understands the importance of providing visibility to our customers when packages are scanned properly. Lastly, the safety, security and USPS brand are of utmost importance.

Greater Indiana District management conditionally agrees with the report.

Finding 1: Delayed Mail

The OIG identified inaccurate reporting of delayed mail at the Linwood Station Post Office.

Management should have ensured that the station had enough resources to deliver all the mail each day. Postal Service policy states that managers must review all communications that may affect the day's workload and be sure that replacements are available for unscheduled absences. In addition, policy[10][11][9] states that managers must review states that all types of First-Class Mail, Priority Mail, and Priority Express Mail are always committed for delivery on the day of receipt. Managers are also required to report in CSDRS all mail that remains in a unit after the carriers have left for their street duties.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Manager, Greater Indiana District agrees with the finding.

The Postmaster of Indianapolis has made it a priority to improve staffing at Linwood Station, the unit currently has 0 CCA's on the roles which has eliminated failed deliveries and delayed in mail in the unit most every day. A CRDO level 2 team was assigned to Linwood and they conducted targeted training with the EAS staff regarding proper volume recording in CSDRS and DCV now that CSDRS has been retired. See attached documentation from CRDO level 2 support team.

Finding 2: Package Scanning

The OIG identified employees at Linwood Station were improperly scanning packages at the delivery unit.

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Management should have monitored scan performance daily and enforced compliance, including ensuring that all packages are scanned at the delivery point and not at the delivery unit. The Postal Service's goal is to ensure proper delivery attempts for mailpieces to the correct address with proper service,[20] which includes scanning packages at the time and location of delivery.[21] In addition, packages in the "Notice Left" area should have been reviewed for second notices and returned to sender if they remained after the prescribed number of days.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Manager, Greater Indiana District agrees with the recommendation.

The Linwood Station Post Office has been instructed to follow applicable Postal Service scanning procedures.

The manager at the Carmel Post Office conducted training with employees to address the deficiencies identified, see attached, copies of the training records.

Finding 3: Truck Arrival Scanning

Employees at the Linwood Station did not scan all incoming trailer/truck barcodes[22] as required. We reviewed data related to morning truck arrival scans from November 1, 2021, to January 31, 2022, and found that employees did not perform a scan for 169 of 179 scheduled trucks (about 94 percent) arriving from the Indianapolis P&DC.

Management should have reviewed the Arrive Depart Tracking Report[23] to ensure that all expected truck scans were being performed. They should also have instructed employees to perform appropriate trailer/truck barcodes scans and enforced the requirement. According to Postal Service policy,[24] employees must scan the trailer barcode on Postal Service trailers/trucks and highway contract route trucks arriving at the delivery unit during local operating hours.

Management Response/Action Plan:

Manager, Greater Indiana District agrees with the finding.

The Linwood Station Post Office has been instructed to follow applicable Postal Service scanning procedures for all trucks arriving and departing at retail and delivery units.

The manager at the Linwood Station Post Office conducted training with the clerks to address the deficiencies identified, see attached, copies of the training records.

Finding 4: Property Conditions:

We found safety and maintenance issues at the Linwood Station, including fire extinguishers that had not been inspected, blocked electrical panels in a boiler room, and broken windows outside the customer entrance.
Further, we identified issues related to the ceiling throughout the facility including:

UNITED STATES POSTAL SERVICE

- Dust build-up around air vents in the customer lobby

- Damaged and missing ceiling tiles in the workroom area

- Holes in the boiler room ceiling

Management Response/ Action Plan:

Fire extinguishers have been inspected- see attached photos
Area around electrical panels have been cleared- see attached photos
Broken windows have not been repaired- FFSP request 3320944
Ceiling tile/ boiler room ceiling repairs have not been completed- FSSP request 3305466
Vent area has been cleaned- see attached photos

Christi Johnson-Kennedy
District Manager
Indiana District

cc: Chief Retail & Delivery Officer
    Vp Area Retail & Delivery Operations
    Corporate Audit Response Management

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